

VEGETABLE OF THE MONTH

FEBRUARY



ASPARAGUS

This vegetable is sometimes referred to as the aristocrat of vegetables. Many Greeks and Romans not only appreciate asparagus for its taste but also believe it possesses medicinal properties from alleviating toothaches to preventing bee stings. Such things are mythical, but asparagus does contain a good supply of vitamins and minerals. Asparagus appears in markets as early as February, but the peak of this crop's season is in April and May.

Varieties: *Asparagus can be found in green and white varieties. Green asparagus is the most common in the U.S., while the white is more popular in Europe.*

White asparagus is grown under the soil. This does not allow the sun's rays to penetrate the plant, and therefore it does not produce the chlorophyll necessary to produce the green color. When eaten raw, white asparagus has a sweet, nutty taste.



How to Select: Choose firm yet tender stalks. For the green variety, choose stalks with deep green or purplish tips that are closed and compact. Avoid excessively sandy spears. Stalks with a narrow diameter are more tender than thick ones.

Asparagus

Serving Size 3 1/2 oz raw (8 spears)

Amount Per Serving

Calories 22 **Calories from Fat 0**

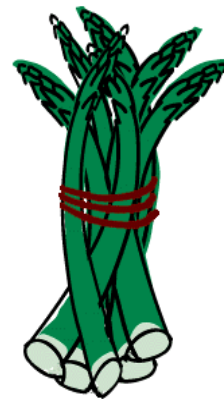
		% Daily Value *
Total Fat	0g	0%
Sodium	2 mg	0%
Potassium	302 mg	N/A
Total Carbohydrate	4 g	1%
Dietary Fiber	2 g	8%
Sugars	4 g	
Protein	3g	
Vitamin A	18%	Vitamin B ₆ 10%
Folate	34%	Vitamin C 55%
Vitamin E	20%	Calcium 2%
Iron	2%	

Storage: Store stalks, with bottoms wrapped in a damp paper towel, in the crisper section of the refrigerator; if you don't have a crisper, put them in plastic bags and place them in the coldest part of the refrigerator. It is best to eat asparagus the day it is purchased, because the flavor lessens with each passing day.

Preparation and Cooking: Wash asparagus in cool running water. Snap off tough ends at their natural breaking point. Before cooking white asparagus, it first must be peeled so that no skin remains. This can be done using a potato peeler. White asparagus needs to be cooked until completely tender, while the green variety can be stir-fried, lightly steamed or cooked in the microwave.

Make Asparagus Part of Your 5 A Day Plan

It is easy to include asparagus in your 5 A Day Plan. Asparagus can be served cold with your favorite low-fat dressing or can be added to any salad. It can also be served as a tasty treat with fresh lemon juice. Steamed asparagus is always a nice addition to any meal, and any leftovers can be used to create delicious soup.



Recipes

No Guilt Asparagus Guacamole

10 1/2 ounces fresh, trimmed or frozen, cut asparagus
1/4 tsp. garlic powder
2 tsp. lime juice (lemon juice may be substituted)
2 Tbsp. canned green chili peppers, drained, chopped
1 Tbsp. onion, chopped
2 tsp. tomato paste
1/8 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. ground cumin
1/8 tsp. white pepper

Cook asparagus. Drain well, pat dry with paper towels and place in blender. Add remaining ingredients. Blend until smooth. Dip will become less thick upon standing and will need to be stirred. Makes 4 servings. This is an official 5 A Day recipe.

Recipe provided by the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board

Nutrient analysis per serving: Calories, 25; fat, 0 g; cholesterol, 0 mg; fiber, 2 g; sodium, 142 mg;

Spaghetti with Spring Vegetables

5 medium tomatoes
1/4 pound small asparagus
1 medium zucchini
1/4 pound small white mushrooms
1 large red and/or green sweet pepper
5 Tbsp. olive oil
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
salt and pepper to taste
3 Tbsp. chopped parsley
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 pound spaghetti

Peel, seed and dice tomatoes. Wash asparagus and cut tips off stalks. Wash and dry zucchini and mushrooms, cut into thin slices. Wash pepper and cut into short thin strips. Heat oil in a large skillet. Add pepper strips and

saute over medium heat 5 - 6 minutes. Add onion, zucchini, asparagus tips, and mushrooms. Saute 4 - 5 minutes. Add diced tomatoes and salt and pepper. Cook uncovered over medium heat 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in parsley and garlic. Taste and adjust for seasoning. Cook spaghetti; drain and place in a warm deep dish or bowl. Pour sauce over spaghetti. Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings. This is an official 5 A Day recipe. Recipe provided by Jeanette Mettler Cappello.

Nutrient analysis per serving: Calories, 450; fat, 13 g; cholesterol, 0 mg; fiber, 5 g; sodium, 16 mg; percent calories from fat, 27%.

Spicy Grape Pasta Salad

8 ounces angel hair pasta
2 cups julienne cooked chicken, light meat
1 1/2 cups seedless grapes
1 cup cut asparagus or broccoli flowerets
1 cup julienne sweet red peppers
1/2 cup diagonally slice celery
1/4 cup sliced green onion
2 Tbsp. chopped cilantro or fresh basil

Spicy Oriental Dressing

1/4 cup rice vinegar or white wine vinegar
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
2 Tbsp. lite soy sauce
1/2 tsp. grated fresh ginger root
1/4 tsp. crushed red chilies
1/4 tsp. sesame oil
1 clove garlic

Cook pasta according to package directions; drain. Toss pasta with 1/4 cup Spicy Oriental Dressing. Cool to room temperature. Add remaining ingredients; toss and serve. To make dressing combine ingredients and let stand at least 30 minutes. Remove garlic before serving. Makes 6 servings.

This is an official 5 A Day recipe.

Recipe provided by the California Table Grape Commission.

Nutrient analysis per serving: Calories, 299; fat, 8 g; cholesterol, 69 mg; fiber, 3 g; sodium, 253 mg; percent calories from fat, 25%.

